

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN  
HOSPITAL

(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 1)

(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)

(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division, Clinic & Administration Building)

VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division

1 Jefferson Barracks Drive

Saint Louis

St. Louis City

Missouri

HABS MO-1943-A

*MO-1943-A*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL (BUILDING 1)

HABS No. MO-1943-A

- Location:** Building 1, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
UTM Coordinates 16 7258488 E 9965812 N
- Date of Construction:** 1922-1923
- Designer:** Treasury Department, Supervising Architect's Office
- Contractor:** James Stewart and Company
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Clinic and Administrative Building at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division
- Significance:** The Main Hospital was part of the early 1920s effort to build clean, modern hospitals for U.S. military veterans. The Main Hospital continued to serve as a hospital building at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, from the 1920s through the 1990s, and is still used as a medical clinic and administrative facility for the hospital.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

The Main Hospital (Building 1) is the central building of the original 1920s U.S. Veterans Hospital campus that is now part of the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division. The Main Hospital is a large Neoclassical Revival-style building with an H-shaped plan that consists of a nineteen-bay central block and an east and west wing; each of the wings is three bays wide and thirty bays long. The building is three stories tall with a small fourth-floor penthouse on the central wing. The exterior is clad in stucco and also features modern aluminum windows and a central gabled pediment with metal replacement columns. The entire building is covered by a flat roofing system hidden by a parapet, except for the penthouse, which has a hipped roof. The building has a reinforced-concrete structural frame composed of concrete posts, beams, and floor slabs, with wall infill of brick and terra-cotta block. All of the building's structural elements are covered on the exterior by stucco. The interior of the hospital has been remodeled many times and retains no aspects of the original floor plan or interior features.

The building is situated in what was originally a grass lawn encircled by an oval-shaped drive. Today, most of the former lawn space is taken up by asphalt parking lots, although there is a small area in front of Building 1 that contains lawn space and a small brick-paved memorial area that serves as a setting for the flagpole. The Main Hospital sits on a slight rise in elevation, so the area in front of the main portico on the south wall offers an elevated vista of what once was the main lawn. Three 1920s and 1930s hospital buildings still frame what was once the main lawn, so a roughly symmetrical vista of the southern portion of the hospital campus is still visible when standing on the paved area around the flagpole. Originally, 1920s and 1930s hospital buildings framed the east and west sides of the lawn south of the main building; these buildings are still in their original locations, although most of the lawn is now paved in asphalt and used for parking space.

The central block's facade (the south wall) has a series of rectangular aluminum windows arranged in a symmetrical pattern. A metal gutter runs along the facade at the roofline level, above the third story and below the parapet. In general, the facade is fairly plain. The center of the facade has a small one-story vestibule that features a replacement aluminum and glass door that serves as the main visitor entrance. Over the main entrance are a metal canopy and a gabled portico with four columns that support a white entablature decorated with triglyphs. The columns, which clearly date to the last fifteen years, are composed of metal and have a white painted finish. The gabled pediment is clad in stucco and has a fan-shaped ornament and a white raking cornice. The fan-shaped ornament appears to be a recent prefabricated feature that replaced an original wood ornamental feature. To the right of the entrance vestibule, an original cornerstone is inscribed:

A. W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury  
Edward Clifford, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury  
James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect  
1922

The central block does not have east and west walls since it is attached to the east and west wings of the building. The north (rear) wall of the central block has stucco cladding and a large one-story section at the center that features a three-sided bay. The north wall also features two small towers with louvered openings at the top; these towers appear to be ventilation stacks. Windows on the north wall are rectangular aluminum replacements, and the north wall has no major architectural details other than a metal gutter at the roofline level above the third floor. Many of the original north-wall window openings have been filled in with stucco, especially the second-story windows. The center of the north wall is connected to a one-story corridor structure that leads north to the former Dining Hall (Building 23, which is now a maintenance and prosthetic clinic building).

The east and west wings are both narrow and rectangular, with short three-bay walls on the north and south and long thirty-bay walls on the east and west. The exteriors are plain with rectangular aluminum replacement windows and glass and aluminum replacement doors. On both wings, metal gutters are placed at roofline level above the third floor and below the parapet on all walls. The north and south walls of both wings are plain with rectangular aluminum windows.

The designs of the long walls that face outward on the east and west wings are somewhat more articulated. On the east wall of the east wing and the west wall of the west wing, the center portion projects out slightly. Each of these projecting center blocks contains shallow pilasters and arched recesses above some of the windows. In addition, some features have been added to these outer walls on the east and west wings. The east wall of the east wing features a small entrance vestibule addition near the center of the wall. The west wall of the west wing wall features a one-story structure that serves as an enclosed connector to the former Recreation Building (Building 24, which now houses the cafeteria and auditorium).

The interior of the entire Main Hospital, including the central block and east and west wings, has been remodeled heavily and today has no traces of the original floor plan or the original finishes. The first floor of the central block is a waiting and receiving area, and some of the remainder of the first floor of the central block contains administrative offices. The remainder of the building is taken up by hospital wards with long central corridors flanked by rooms. All areas of the interior are characterized by gypsum board walls, acoustical drop ceilings, and fluorescent lighting. No evidence of original or older finishes was observed in the building.

### **History:**

The U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, was part of an early 1920s plan to reform health care for veterans. Before the early 1920s, health care for veterans had in many cases been dispensed from improvised facilities that were in poor condition and not well suited for the task. After a well-publicized tour of some of these hospitals, the U.S. Veterans Bureau began planning and construction on new, modern hospitals throughout the United States. Planning for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including drafting of construction drawings for the Main Hospital (Building 1), took place in 1922. The cornerstone for the Main Hospital was laid in 1922, and the building was completed in 1923.

The design of the Main Hospital reflects Neoclassical Revival influence. The early twentieth century had seen a revival of Italian Renaissance and English Palladian architectural design, as well as other forms of European Classical design. In addition, the era of the 1920s was the beginning of a period in which interest in American Colonial architectural forms also reached a climax. Both architectural movements spawned an interest in symmetrical form and Classically inspired ornament. Features such as Classical columns and pediments were used heavily, and the ornamentation on buildings was in many cases restrained compared to the more lavish versions on late nineteenth-century buildings.

As it existed originally, the Main Hospital would have had a Neoclassical Revival exterior design. The building's symmetrical H-shaped layout, with central pediment and flanking wings, reflected the symmetry popular at the time for many public buildings. The original decoration of the building included a central wood portico with Ionic columns on the façade, and pilasters and arched openings on the east and west wings. The windows were multi-light wood sash, most commonly with a six-over-six arrangement. The exterior was ornamental, but this ornament was used sparingly.

Plans for most of the 1920s Veterans Bureau hospital buildings were standardized, but the architectural style was varied according to the location of the hospital. Styles like Spanish Revival might be used at hospitals in the southwestern United States, while Neoclassical and Colonial Revival decoration was more commonly used in the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, New England, and Midwest.<sup>1</sup> Drawings for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including the Main Hospital drawings, bear the title block of the Veterans Bureau, and thus

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<sup>1</sup> Gjore J. Mollenhoff, Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb, "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont," in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*, <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

were designed in-house by federal government architects rather than by a private architectural firm.<sup>2</sup>

James A. Wetmore is recorded on the cornerstone of the Main Hospital as the Acting Supervising Architect. Wetmore was head of the Office of the Supervising Architect from 1915 to 1933. This office was a wing of the Treasury Department and was often in charge of designing federal facilities such as courthouses and post offices. Wetmore was primarily a lawyer and government administrator and should not be credited with the actual design of the Main Hospital building—staff architects of the Office of the Supervising Architect would have designed the Main Hospital and other buildings at the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks.<sup>3</sup>

During his tenure as head of the supervising architect's office, Wetmore worked closely with William McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, to develop standard plans for federal buildings. Building 1 is a product of this standardization movement. Highly visible buildings that accommodated high-revenue facilities in large cities were given a greater level of architectural detail, while buildings on less prominent sites in small communities were more plain. Since the hospital was in a remote site, the buildings have a more basic design than that of a main federal building, like a post office, in a large city. Although the design for Building 1 was standardized, individual plan sets were developed for the building. The supervising architect's office recognized that each building site was unique and developed individual plan sets based on the standard designs for every building they were responsible for. The use of standardized plans cut down on costs and sped up construction time.<sup>4</sup>

Drawings for the Main Hospital were drafted in March and April of 1922, with a revised west wing basement plan drawn up in August 1922. The drawings all bear the title block of the Veterans Bureau, and in many cases the specific drafter did not sign or initial the drawings. A few drawings are initialed "L.W.C." and the drafter of one floor plan sheet was H. J. Walther. The review line on most of the title blocks was signed by Warren G. Noll, who was the foreman draftsman for the Office of the Supervising Architect.<sup>5</sup>

Interior floor plans show that the center block was used for the lobby, admissions, emergency room, and kitchen on the first floor, with administrative space and the patient dining room on the second floor. The third floor of the center block contained the operating room and x-ray facilities, plus rooms assigned to functions like massage, electro

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<sup>2</sup> Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office, *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Hospital Building*, 1922, on file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>3</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220, 215, 222-223.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Department of the Treasury, *Hospital Building*.

therapy, and sterilization. The basement was used mainly for a bakery, food-storage space, and locker rooms and dining facilities for hospital attendants.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the wards and private rooms for patients were in the east and west wings on all three floors. Each floor contained only a small number of private rooms, so most patients would have been assigned to multi-patient wards. Wards varied in size from smaller 15'0" x 23'0" wards for four patients, to the larger wards that could accommodate sixteen patients and measured 15'0" x 61'0". A notable feature of the wings was the four-room psychiatric unit on the first floor of the east wing.<sup>7</sup>

The second and third floors of the east and west wings also each contained a solarium, a large glassed-in porch space. Medical experts had developed theories in the nineteenth century that diseases were often caused or exacerbated by stagnant air and lack of light. These theories still held sway in the 1920s and led many hospital buildings to be designed with large porches or solaria so patients could be exposed to sunlight and fresh air. The solaria in the Main Hospital were rooms with large windows on three sides.<sup>8</sup>

Basement spaces in both the east and west wings were also used for a wide variety of functions. The basement of the east wing contained storage space, a chapel, a small morgue, the hospital's pharmacy, the engineering and janitor shop, and a small receiving room. The west-wing basement featured a small office, a barber shop, some fairly large spaces for occupational therapy, and a large recreation room that was equipped with a small stage, presumably for presentations and very small theatrical productions. A backstage space with storage and dressing rooms sat behind the stage.<sup>9</sup>

A series of floor plans of the Main Hospital from 1937 to 1939 show changes to the interior layout. Smaller wards housing four patient beds had been left in place from the original 1922 plan, and several ten-bed wards had been retained as well. However, the largest wards had been divided up into a series of smaller wards that held two, three, or five beds. Kitchen and dining spaces had been moved out of the first and second floors of the central block and replaced by a dental facility and medical records area on the first floor, and by more hospital ward space on the second floor.<sup>10</sup>

The Jefferson Barracks campus continued to function as a hospital for general medicine through the end of the 1940s. Then from 1950 to 1952, a new construction and renovation

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 1, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., 1937-1939*, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

campaign converted the Jefferson Barracks VA facility from a general medicine hospital to a neuropsychiatric hospital. The VA constructed specific buildings for psychiatric treatment, but the psychiatric hospitals also included a general hospital building. This building was used to treat mental patients who needed surgery or other medical attention for physical ailments, and also may have been used for medical treatment of veterans who were not mental patients but lived near the hospital. After 1952, the Main Hospital functioned as the general medicine hospital for the psychiatric hospital complex at Jefferson Barracks.

Drawings from 1955 by Maguolo and Quick, Architects and Engineers, show much of the Main Hospital still occupied by three- to seven-bed ward spaces. However, some changes were made to the floor plan in 1955, such as installing a series of administrative offices on the first floor of the west wing, and replacing the patient wards on the third floor of the central block with a series of laboratory spaces.<sup>11</sup> Also, with the construction of above-ground connector structures in the 1950s, the Main Hospital was linked with other buildings on the VA Hospital campus, allowing patients and staff to move around the campus while staying indoors.

The exterior of Building 1 was re-covered in stucco in 1956, and in 1972 the medical and administration offices of the center block and the west wing were remodeled. Additional exterior remodeling was undertaken by the Veterans Administration in the 1970s through the 2000s, including replacing the original multi-light windows with plain aluminum windows, resurfacing the stucco exterior, and replacing the original wood columns of the main portico.<sup>12</sup> Additional remodeling has also been carried out on the interior of the building during the last forty years.

Today, the Main Hospital (Building 1) still serves as a hospital and medical clinic facility for the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division. Based on a current redevelopment project for the hospital campus, some buildings dating from the 1920s through the 1960s will be demolished. Portions of the hospital lands will be deeded to the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, while some of the land will be used to build new facilities for the hospital. There are no plans to demolish the Main Hospital as part of the current project, so it will continue to serve as an active facility of the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division.

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<sup>11</sup> Maguolo and Quick, Architects and Engineers, *Construction Drawings for Additions and Alterations, Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Building, No. 1*, April 1955, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, Construction drawing files for Building 1, St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, 1950-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.



**Sources:**

Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office. *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Hospital Building*. 1922. On file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2000.

Maguolo and Quick, Architects and Engineers. *Construction Drawings for Additions and Alterations, Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Building, No. 1*. April 1955. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Mollenhoff, Gjore J., Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb. "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont," in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*. <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed May 7, 2010).

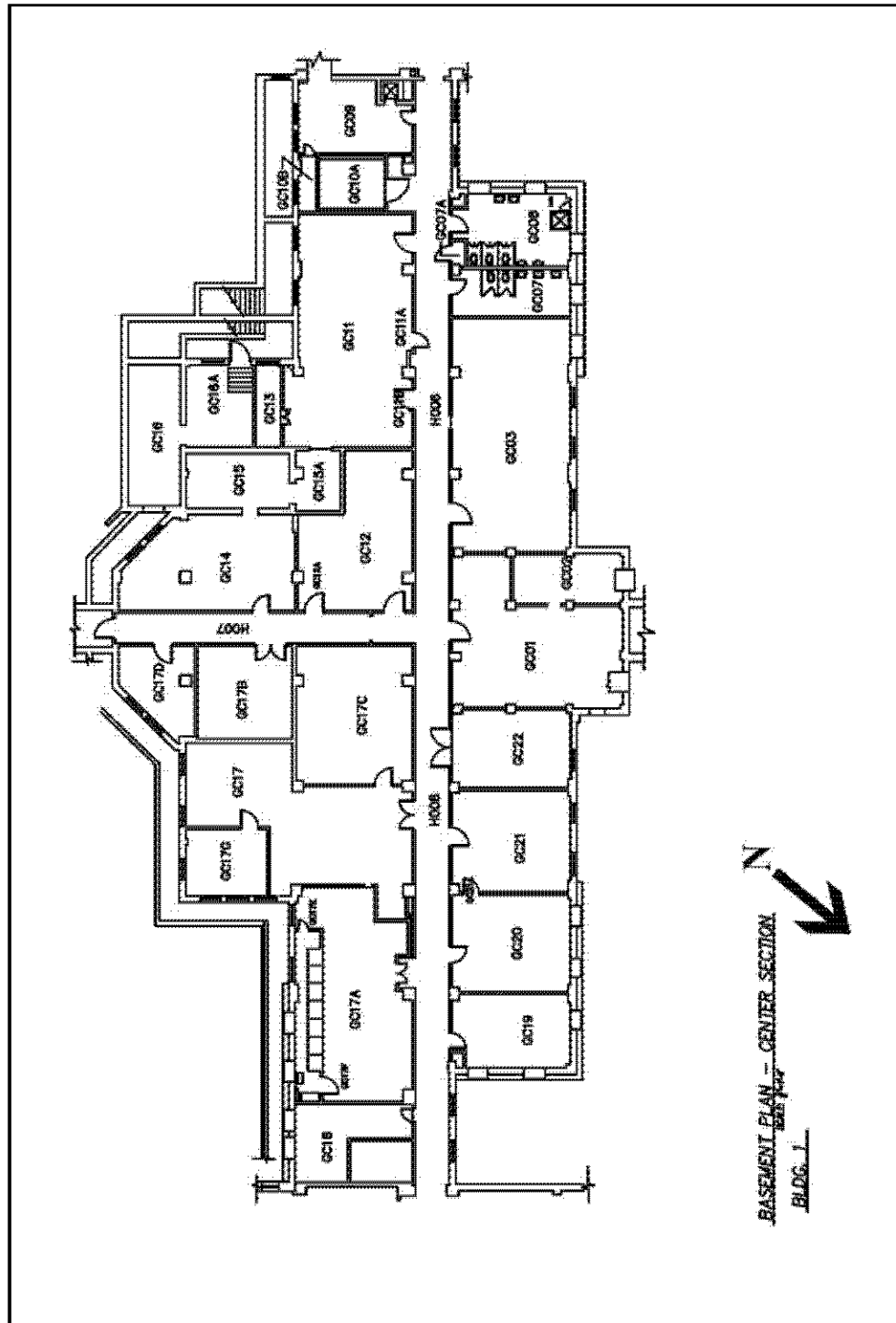
U.S. Veterans Administration. *Alterations to Hospital Building No. 1, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1937-1939. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

———. Construction drawing files for Building 1, St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, 1950-2010. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

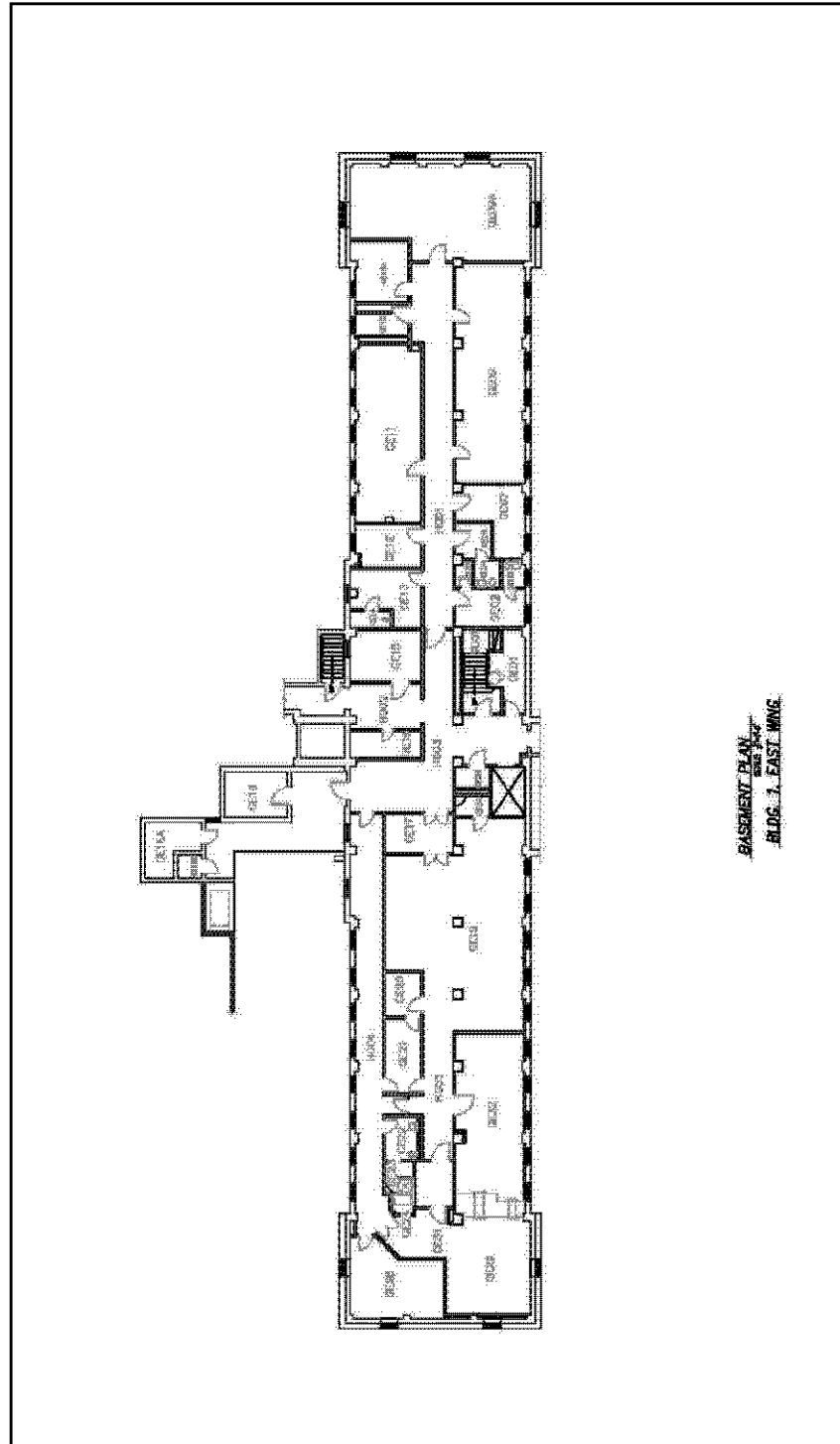
**Historians:**

Maria Burkett, Roy Hampton  
Hardlines Design Company  
4608 Indianola Avenue  
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Tel: 614-784-8733  
Fax: 614-786-9336

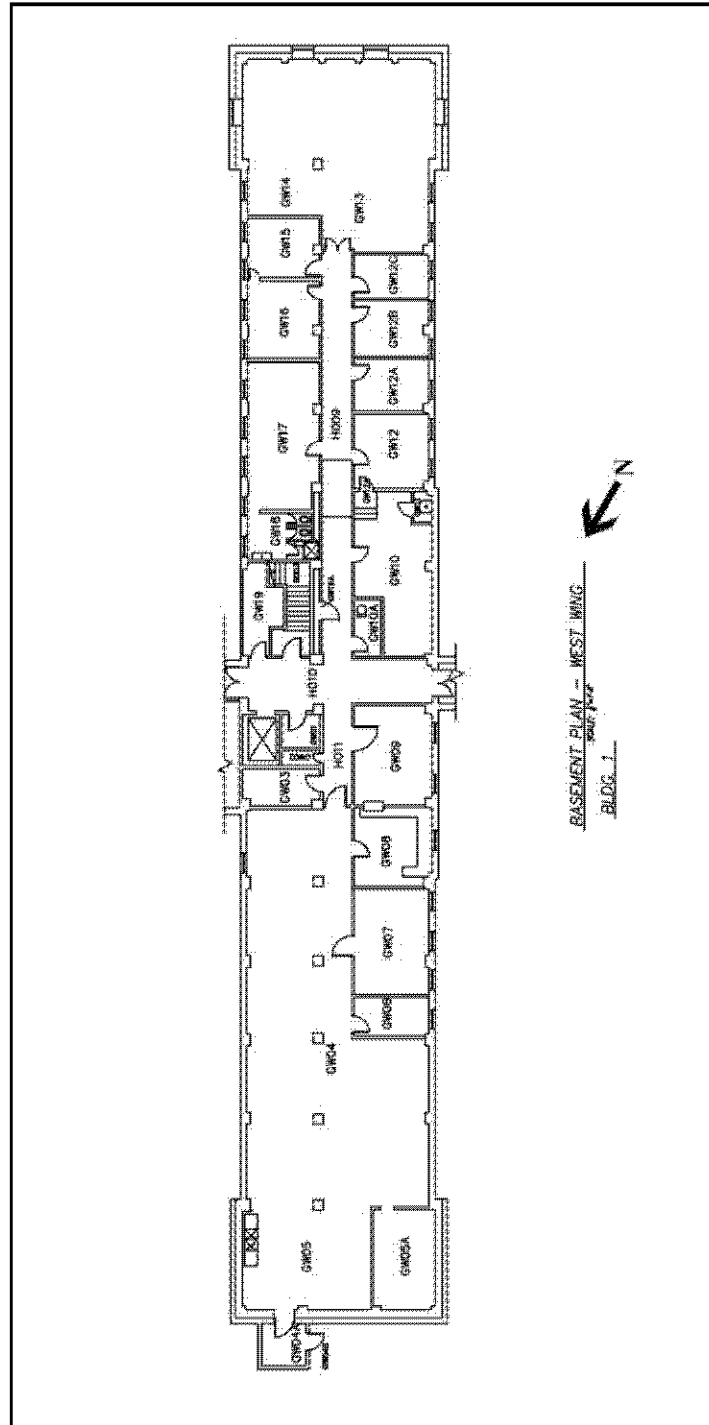
U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 9)



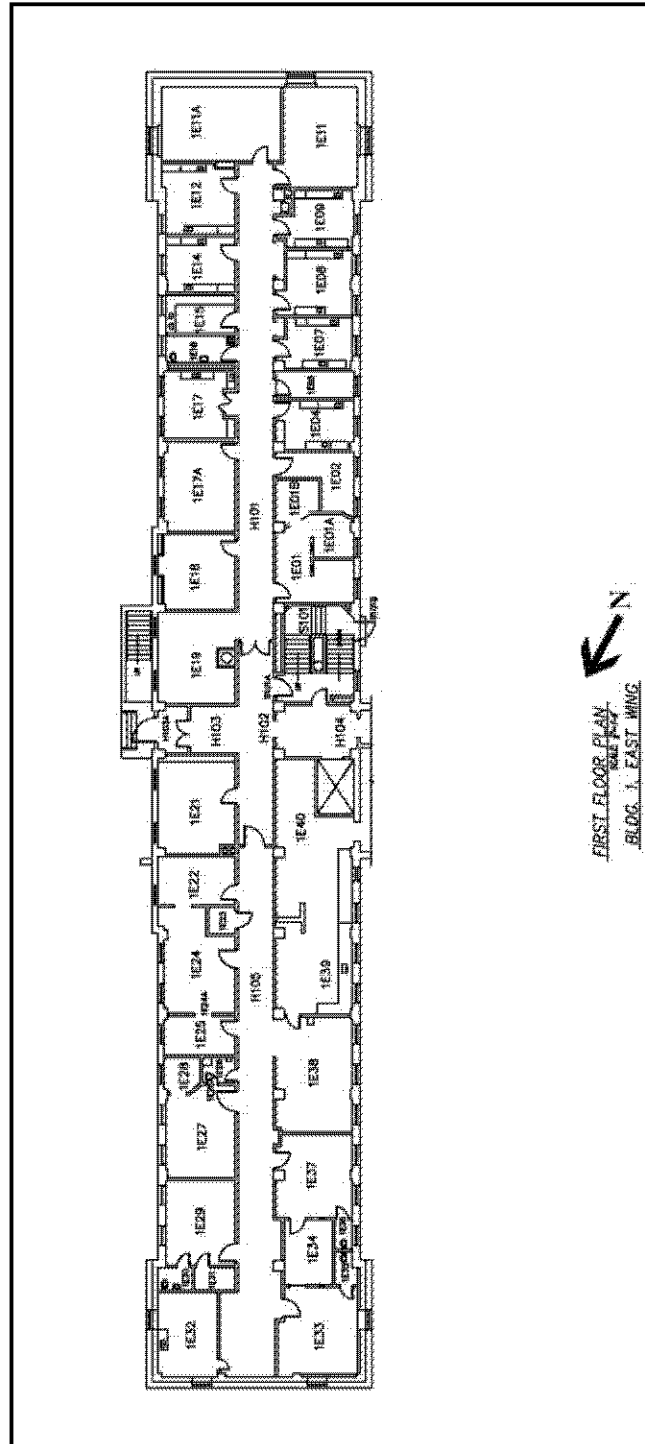
Main Hospital (Building 1), current basement plan, center portion



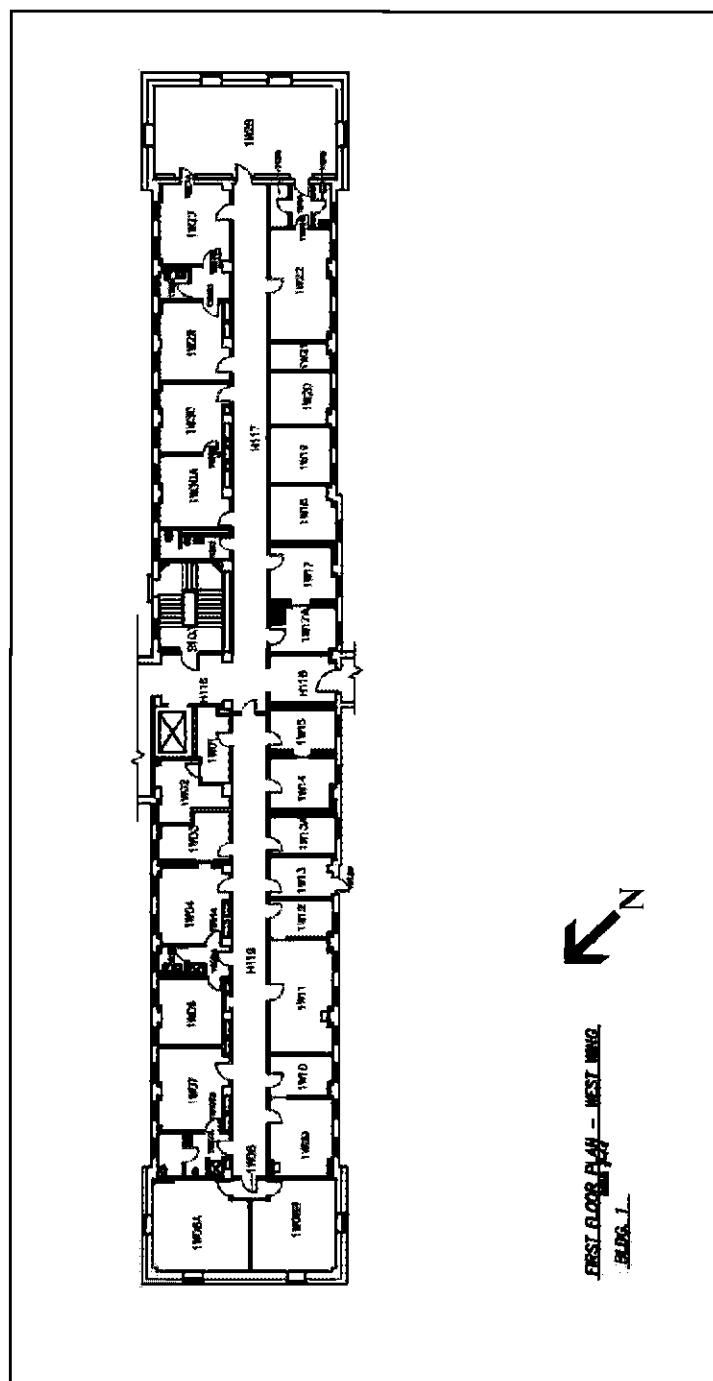
Main Hospital (Building 1), current basement floor plan, east wing



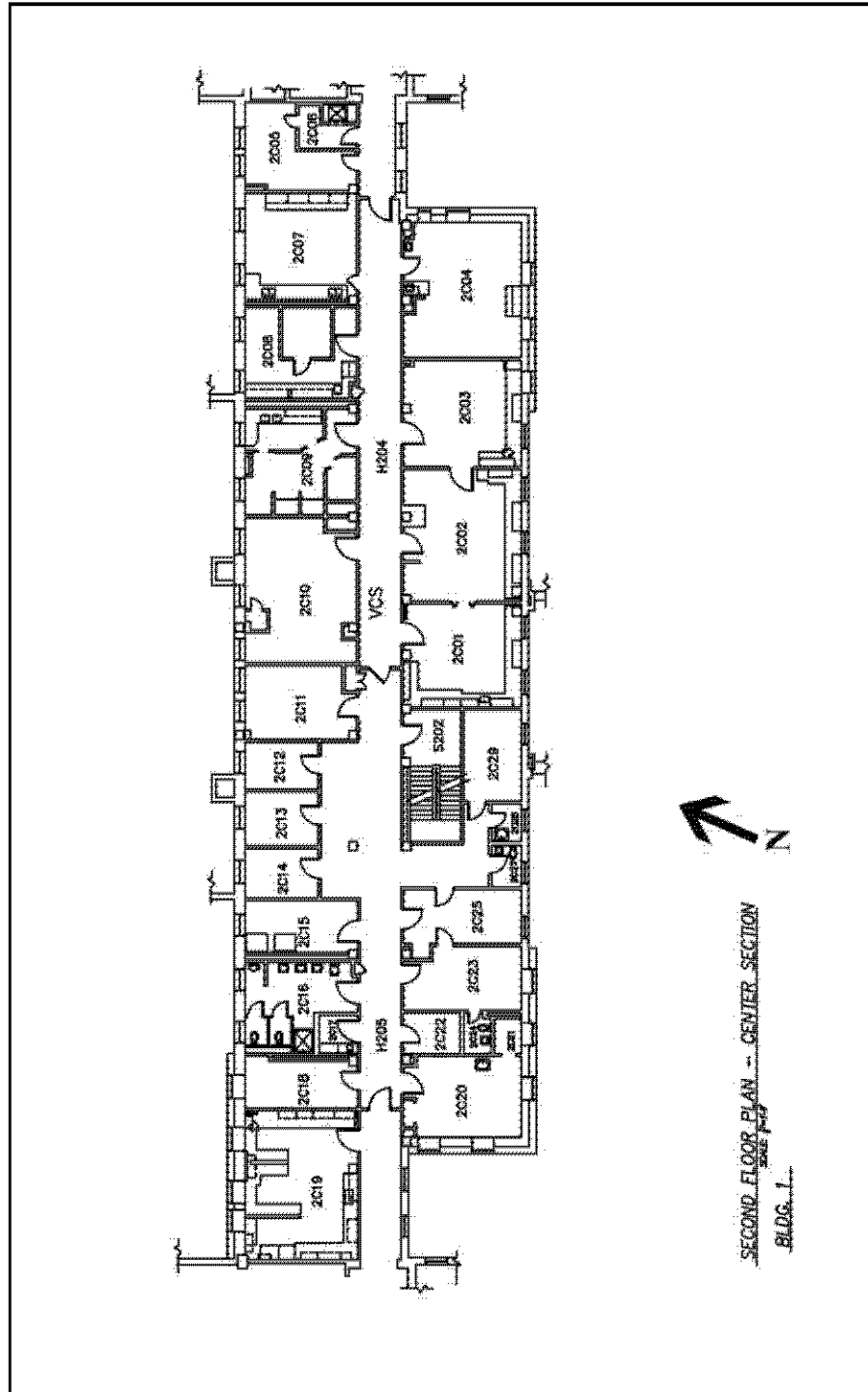
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current basement plan, west wing



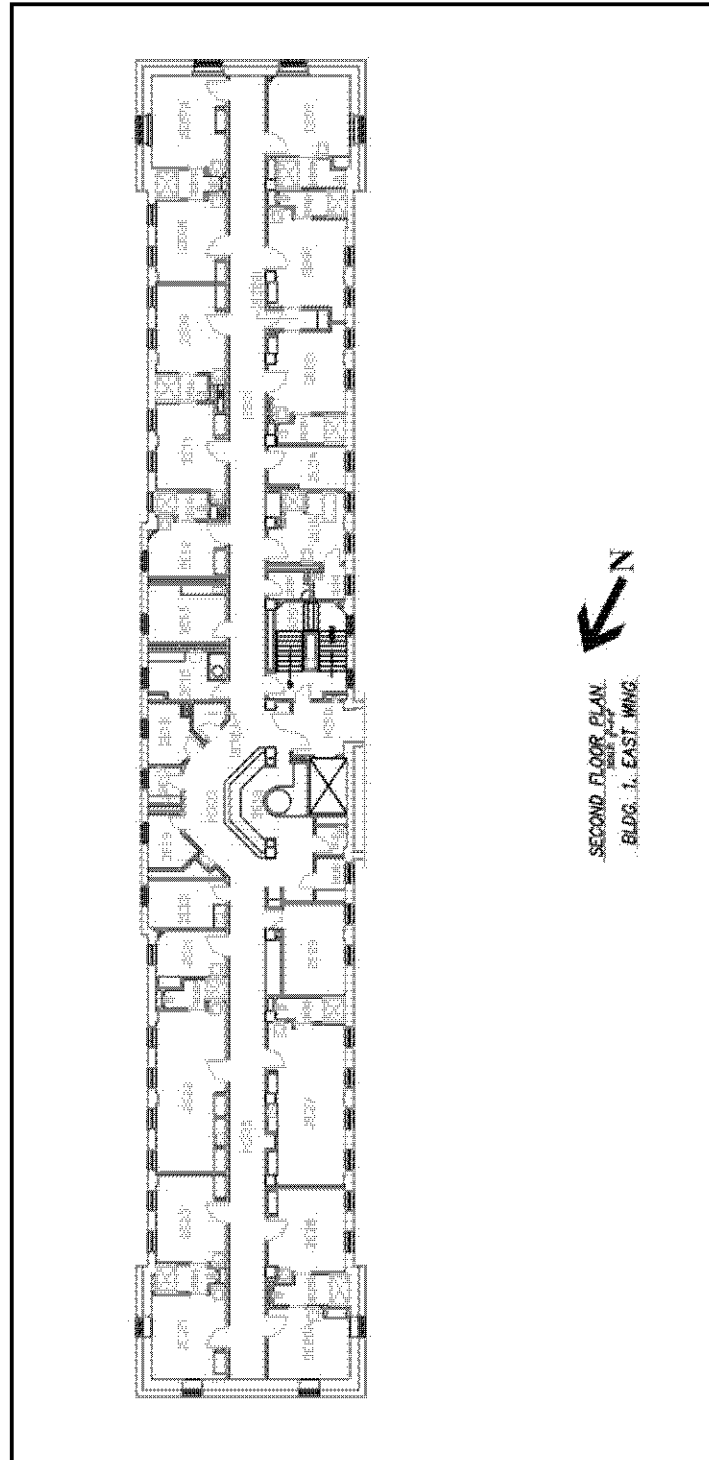
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current first-floor plan, east wing



Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current first-floor plan, west wing



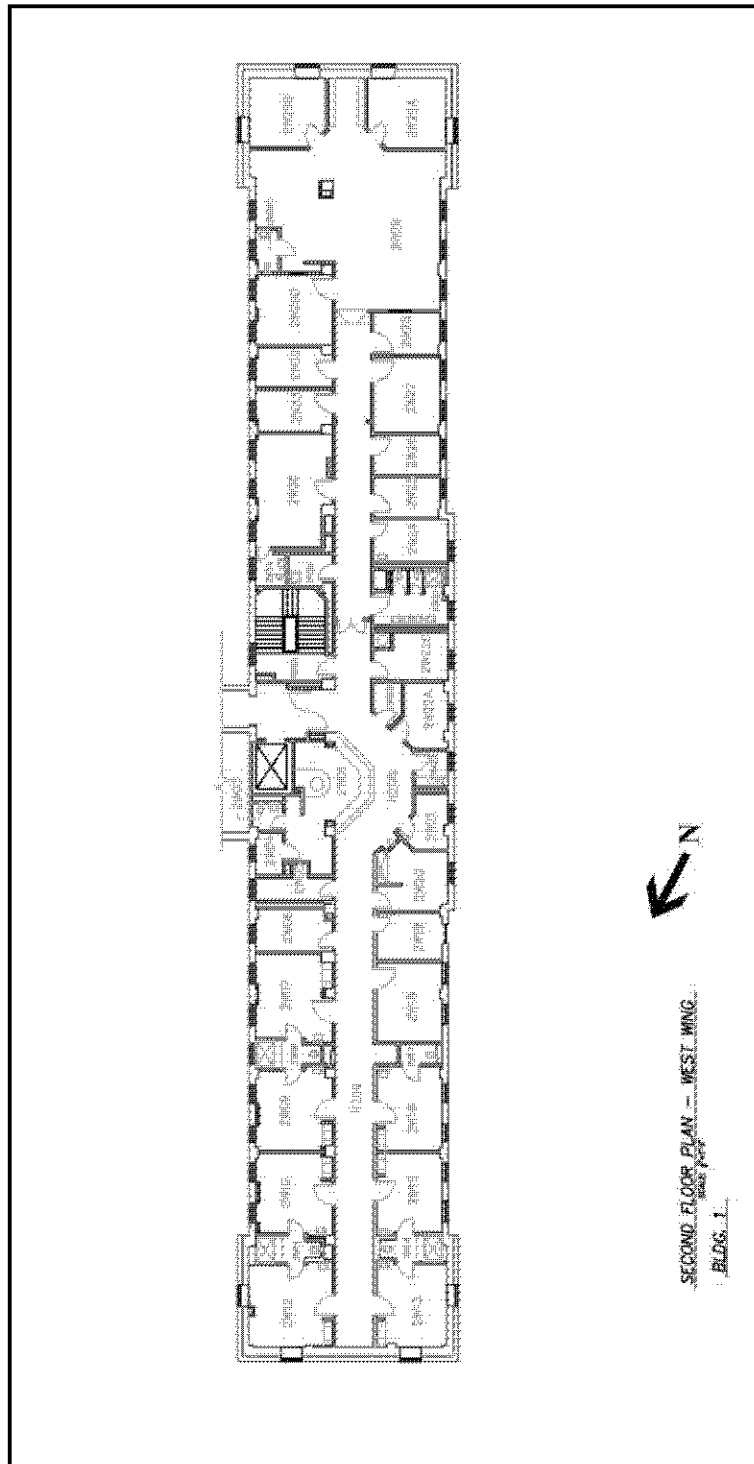
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current second-floor plan, center portion



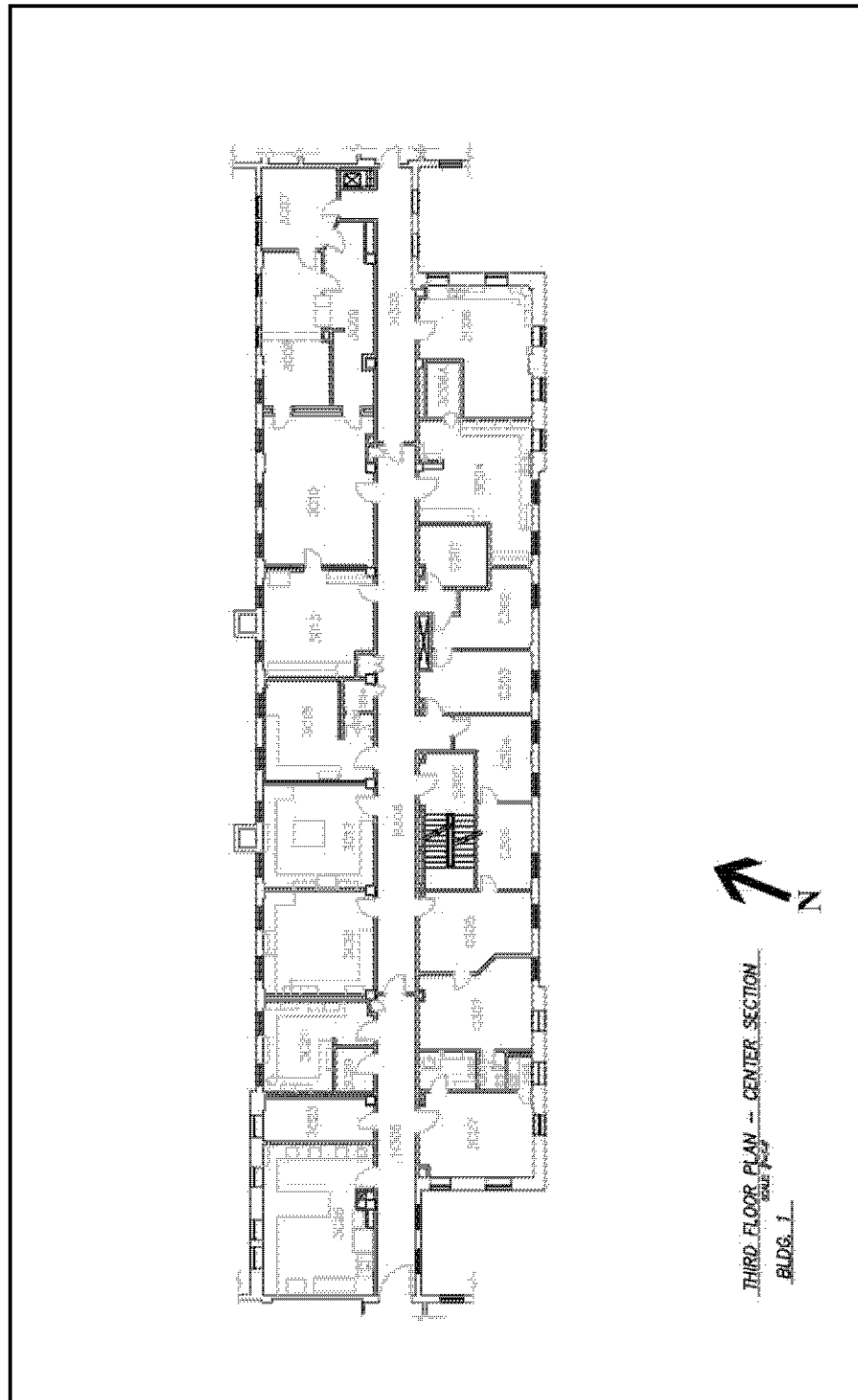
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), second-floor plan, east wing



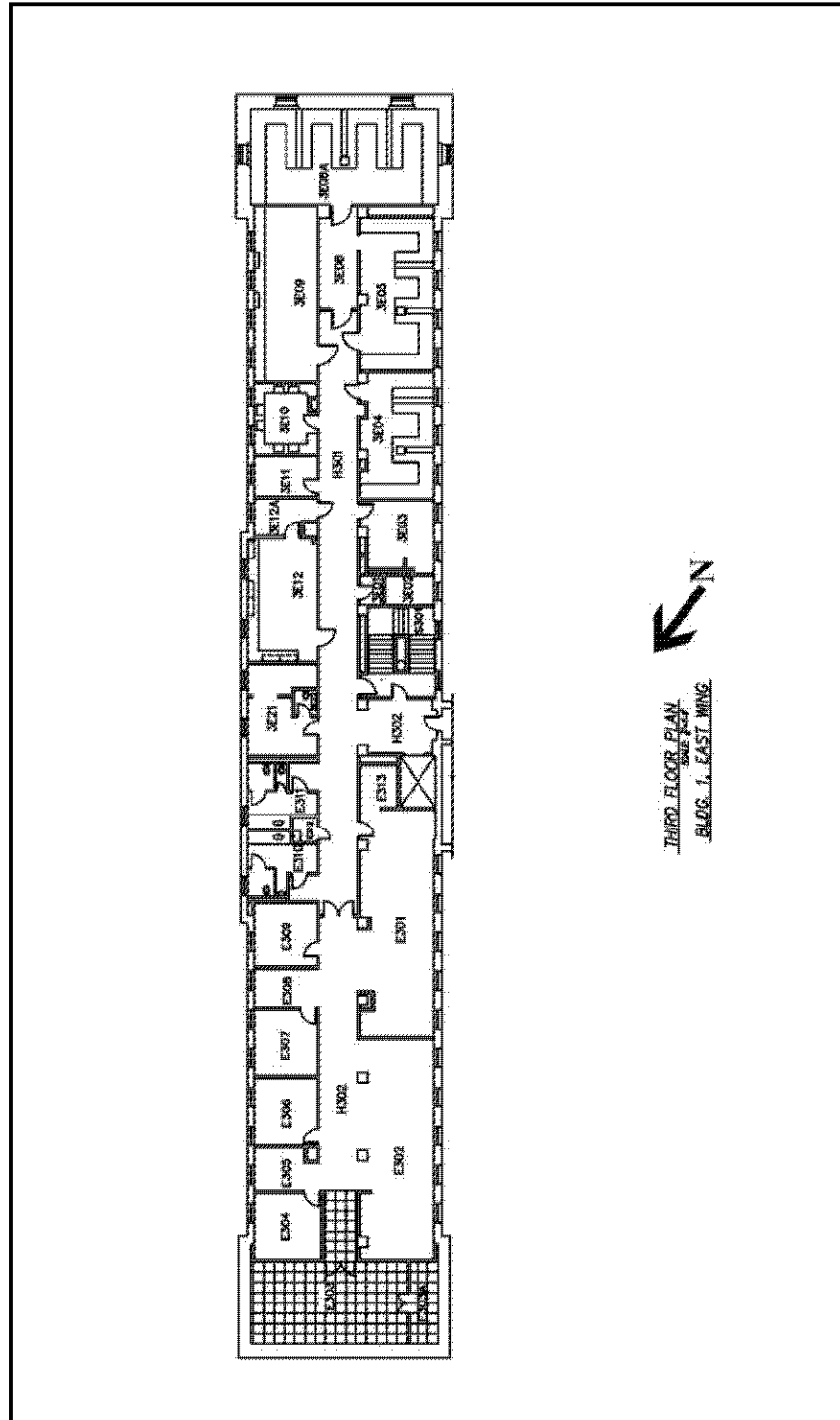
U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 16)



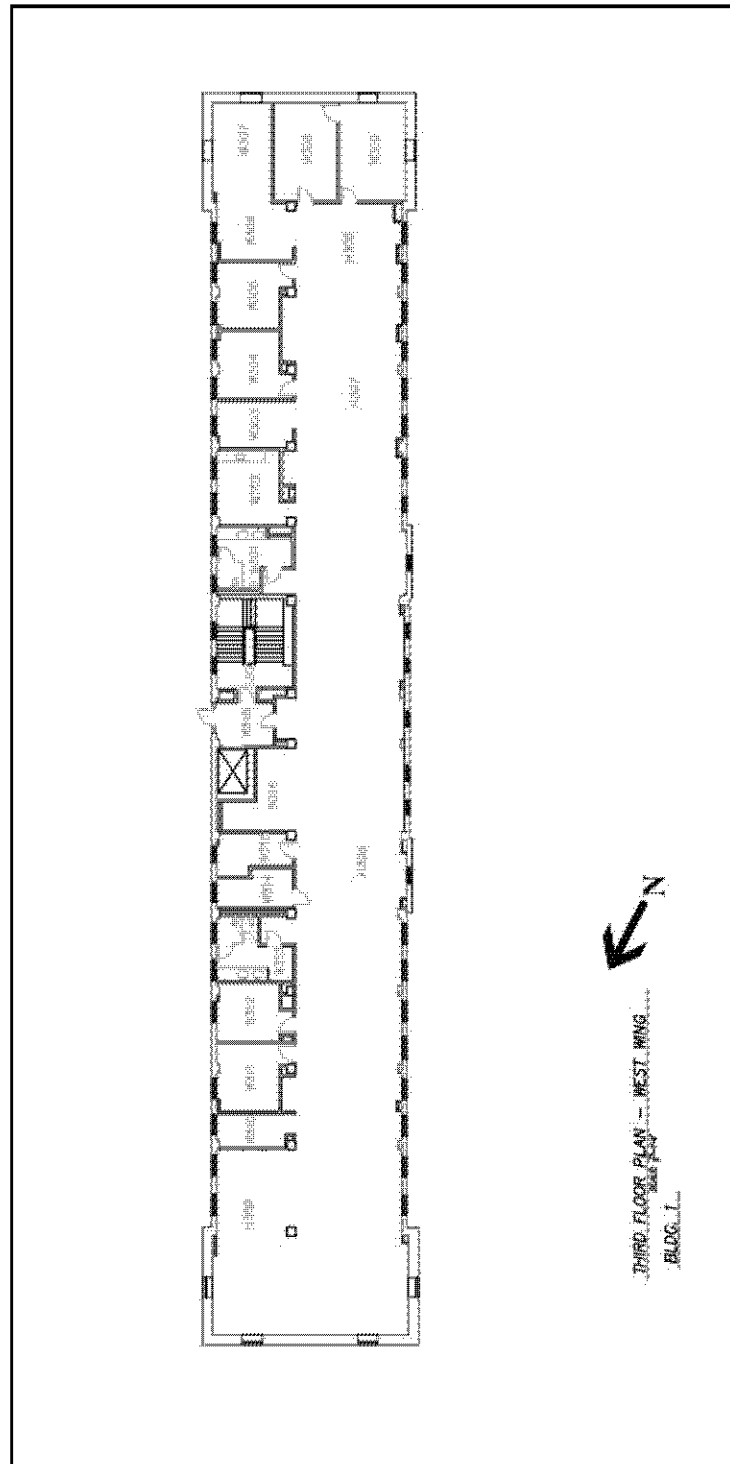
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current second-floor plan, west wing



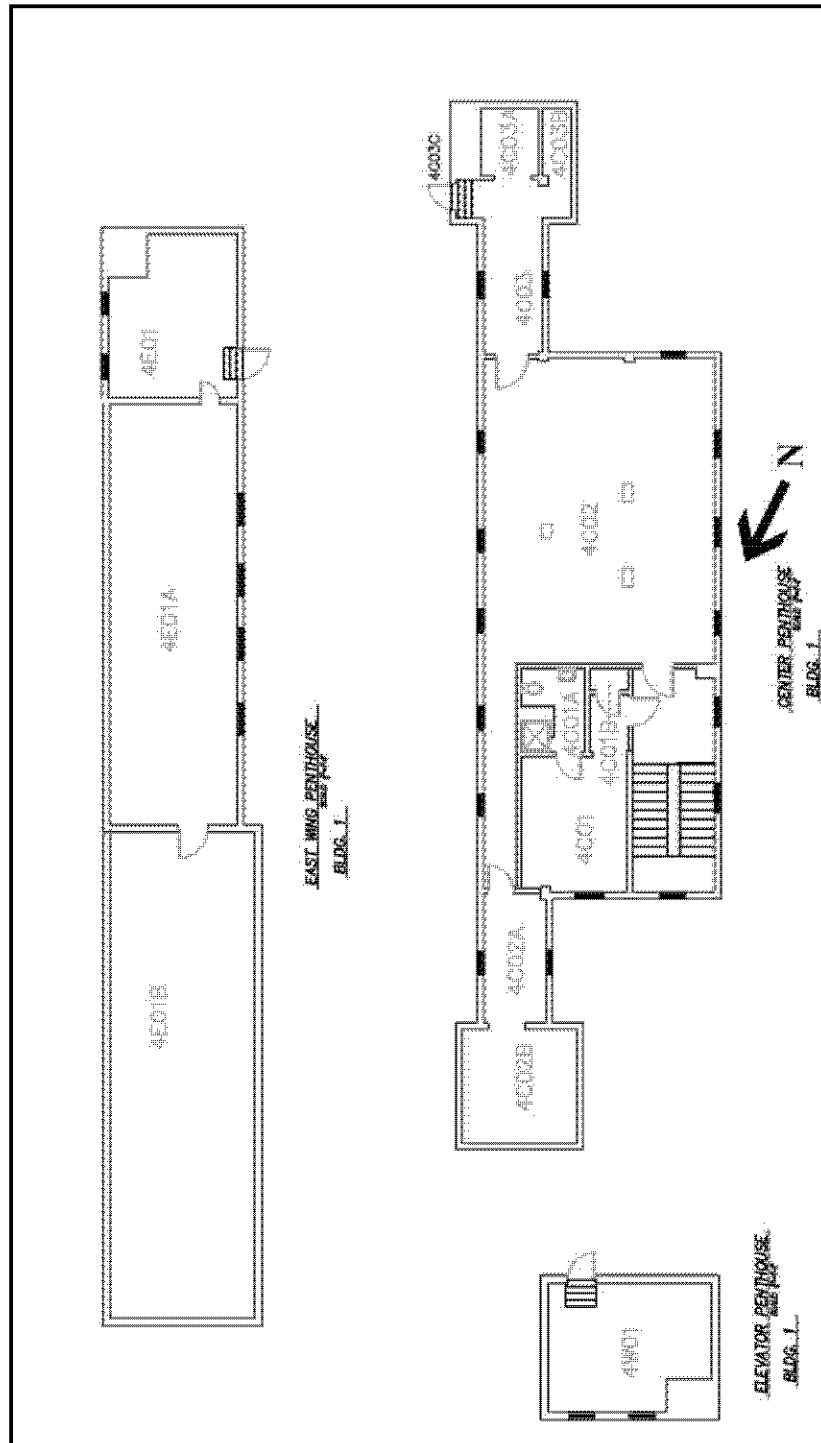
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current third-floor plan, center section



Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current third-floor plan, east wing

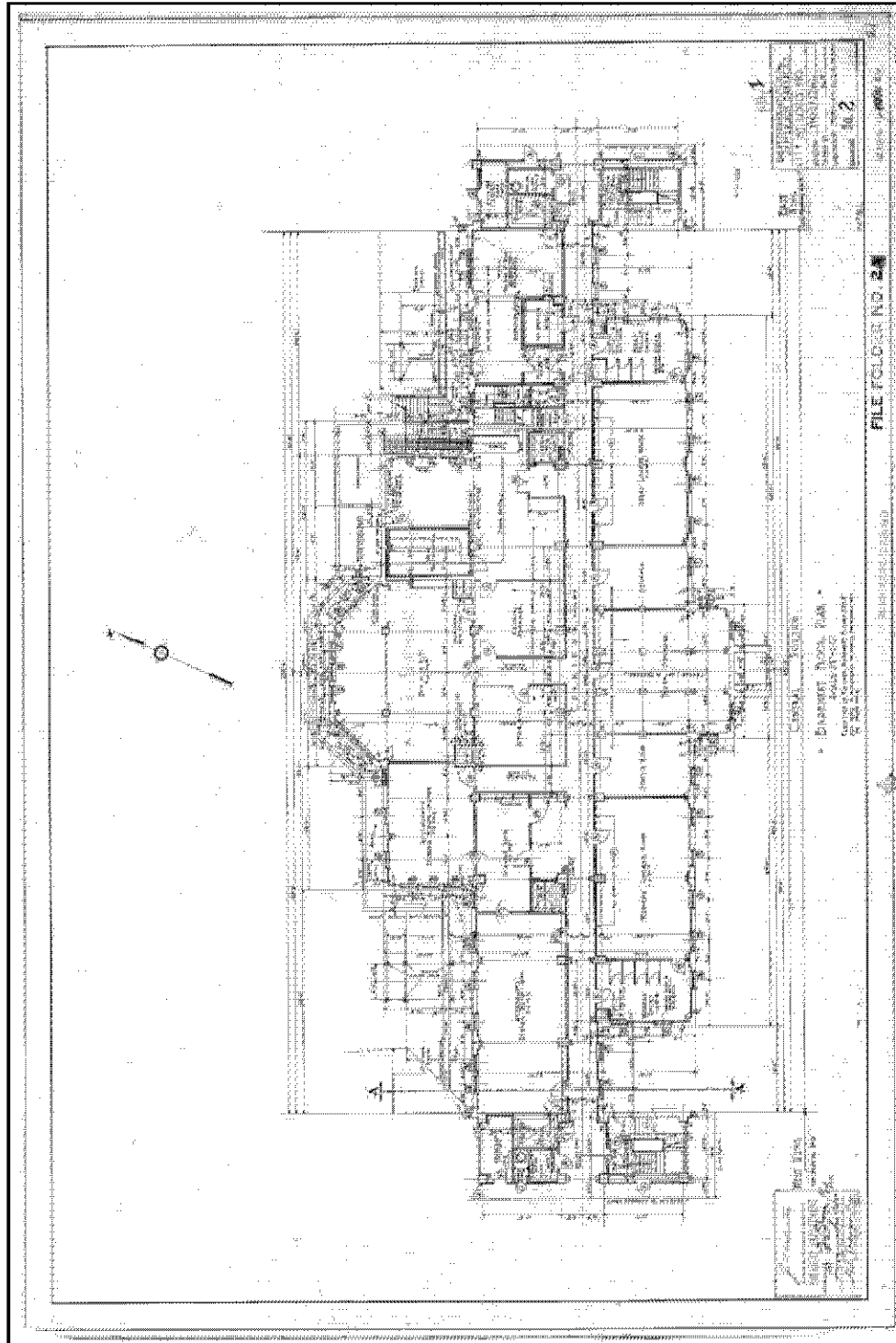


Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current third-floor plan, west wing



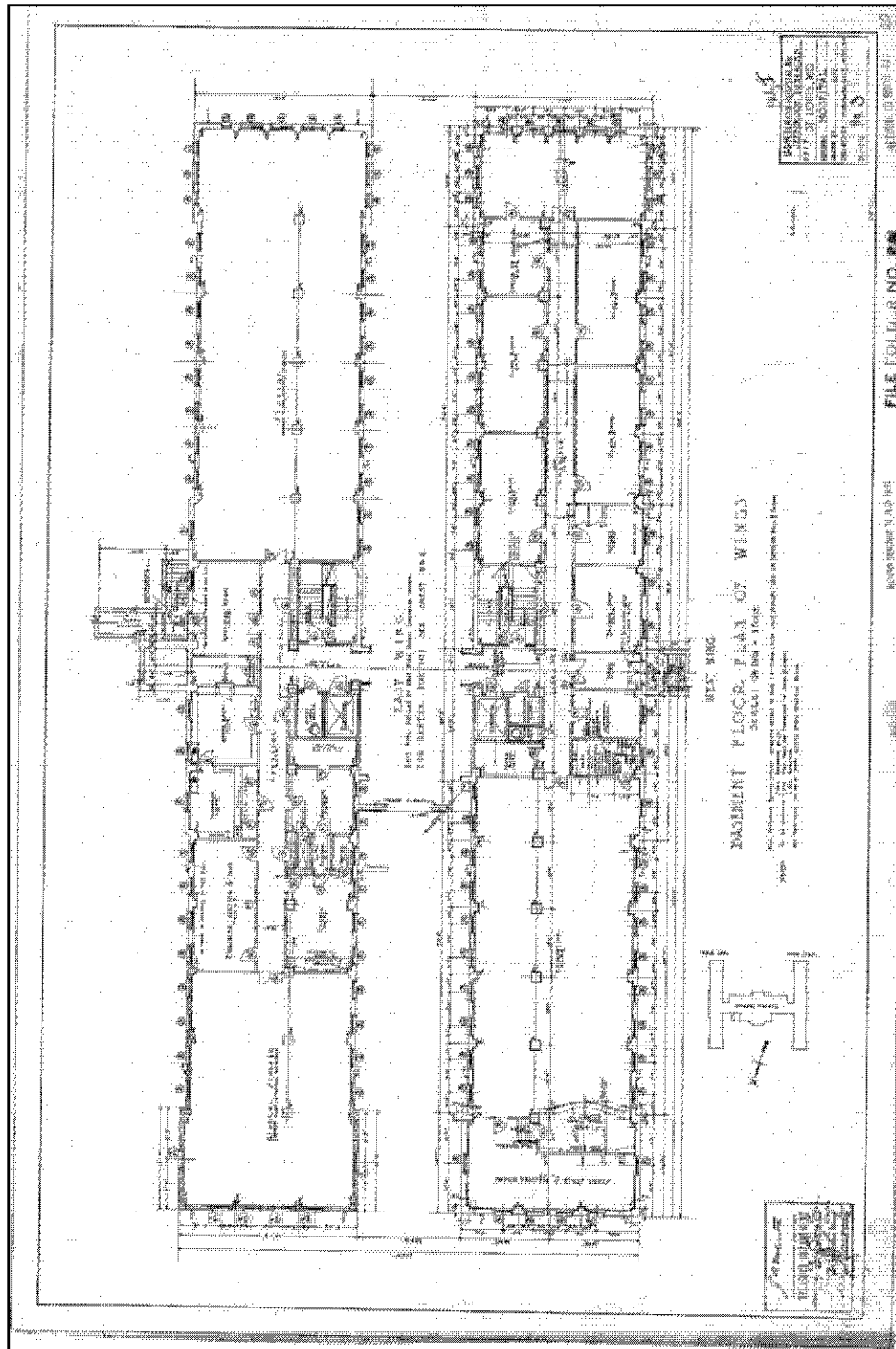
Main Hospital Building (Building 1), current penthouse plan

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 21)



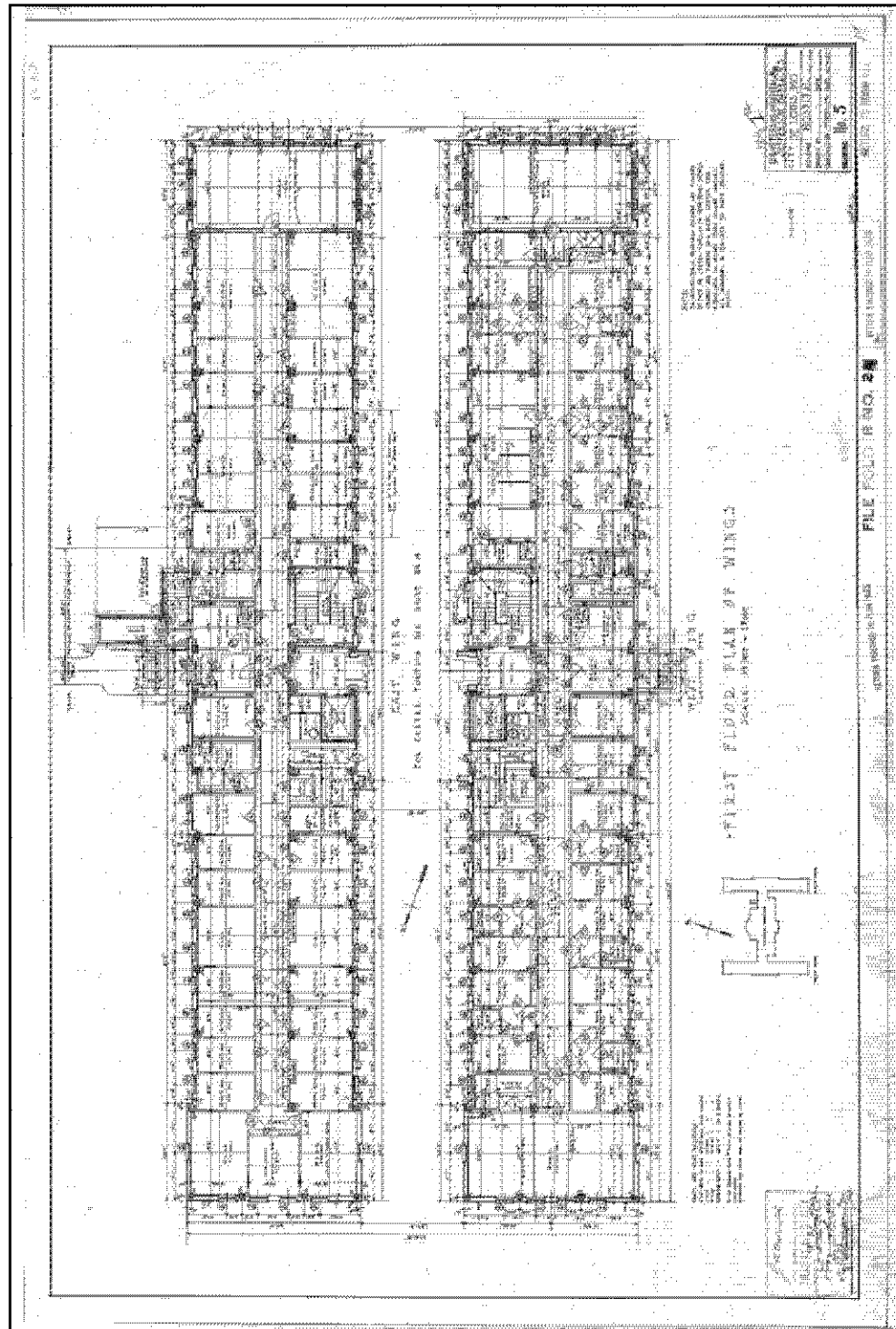
Original central basement floor plan of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 22)



Original basement floor plan of the wings of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922

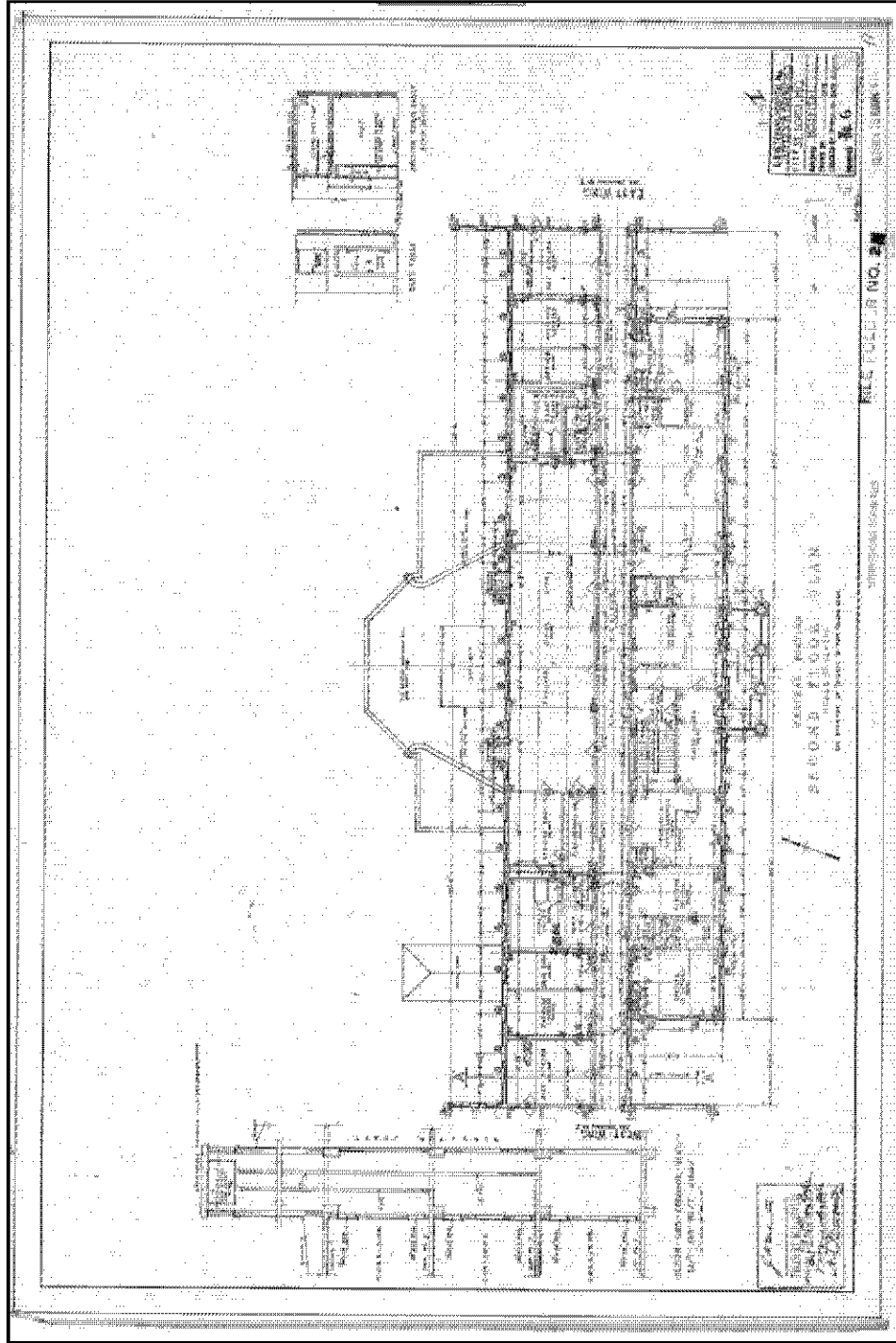
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HABS No. MO-1943-A  
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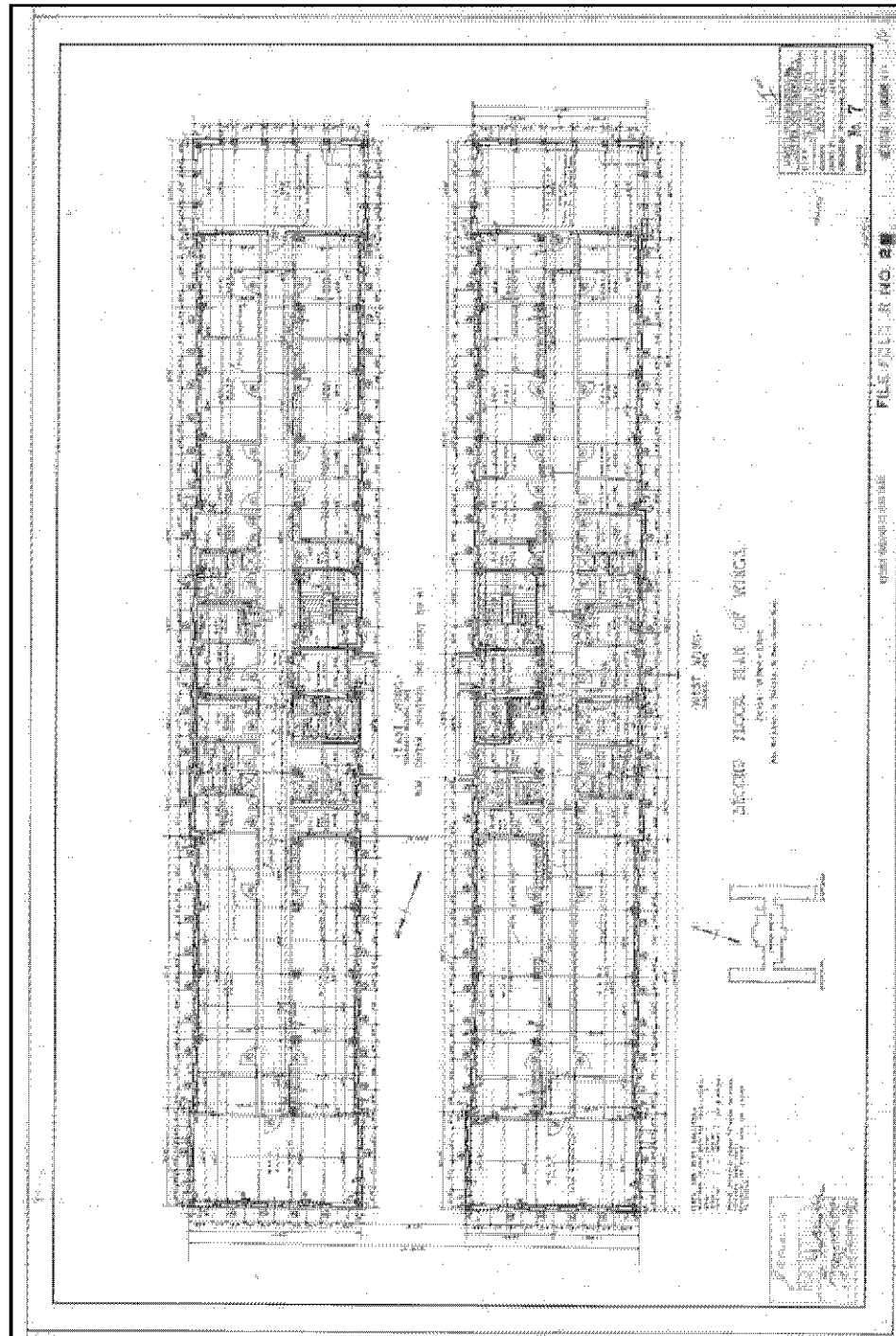
Original floor plan of first-floor wings of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922



U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 24)

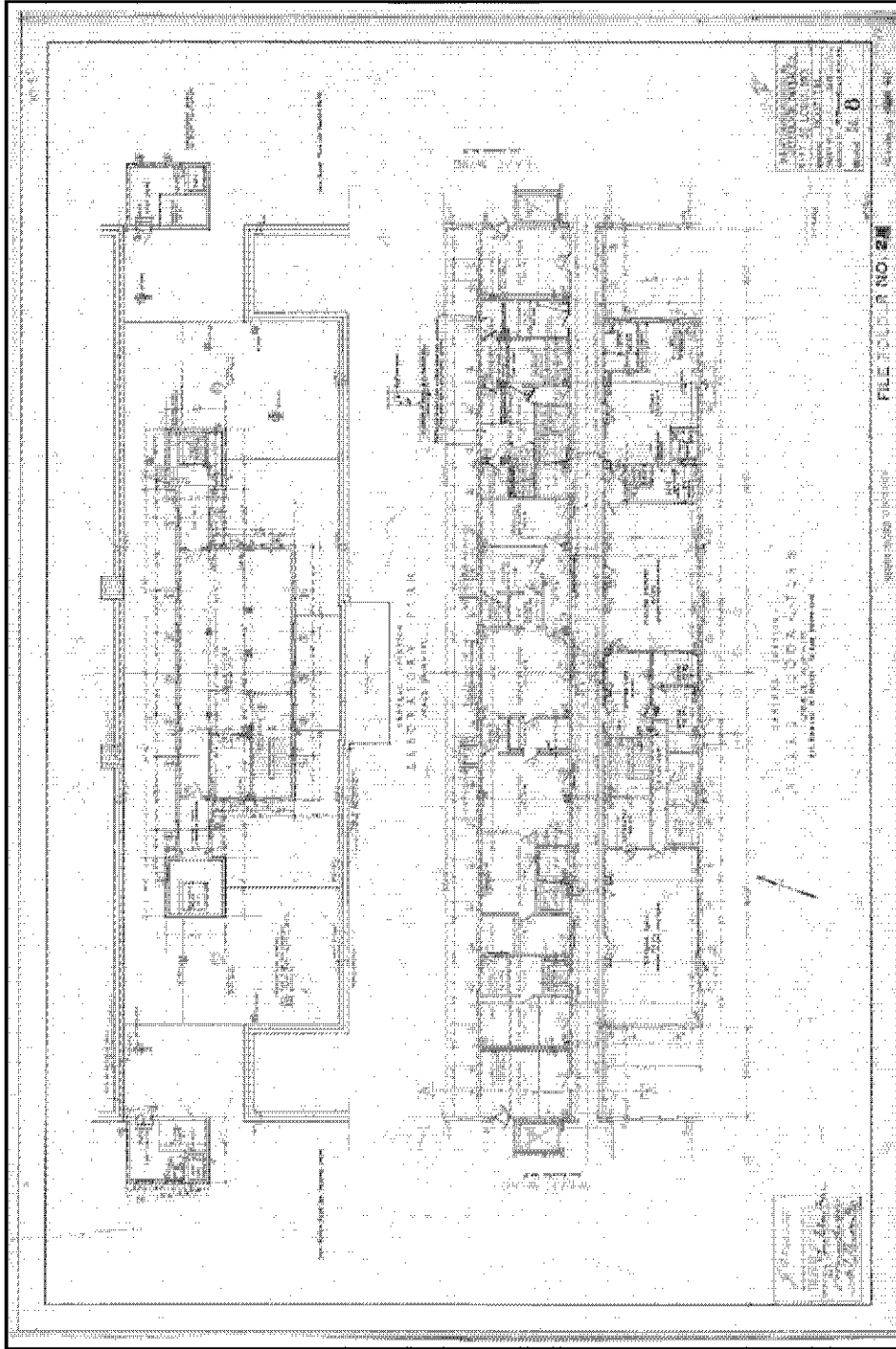


Original floor plan of the central portion of the second floor of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922

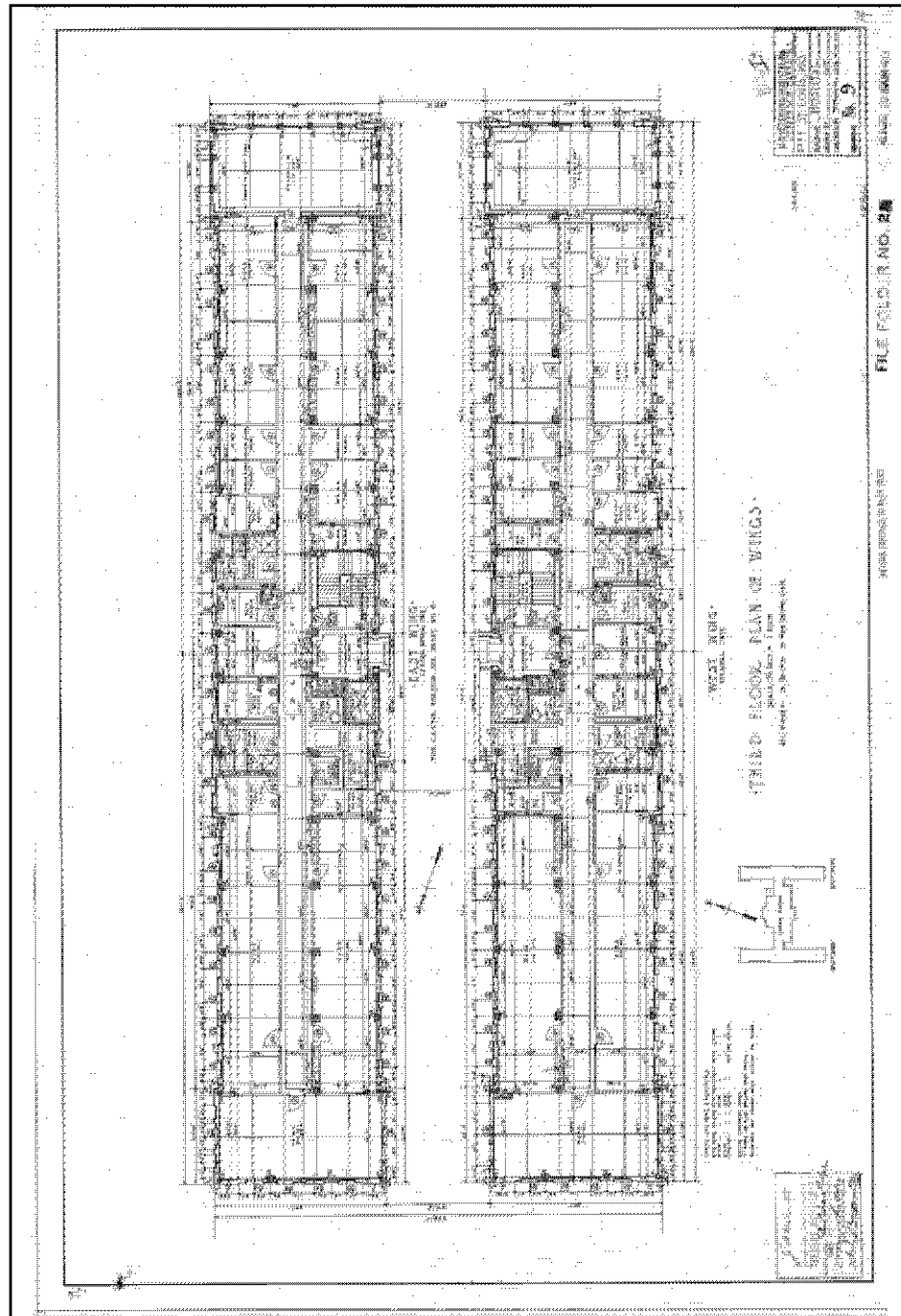


Original floor plan of the second floor of the wings of the  
Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922

(Page 26)

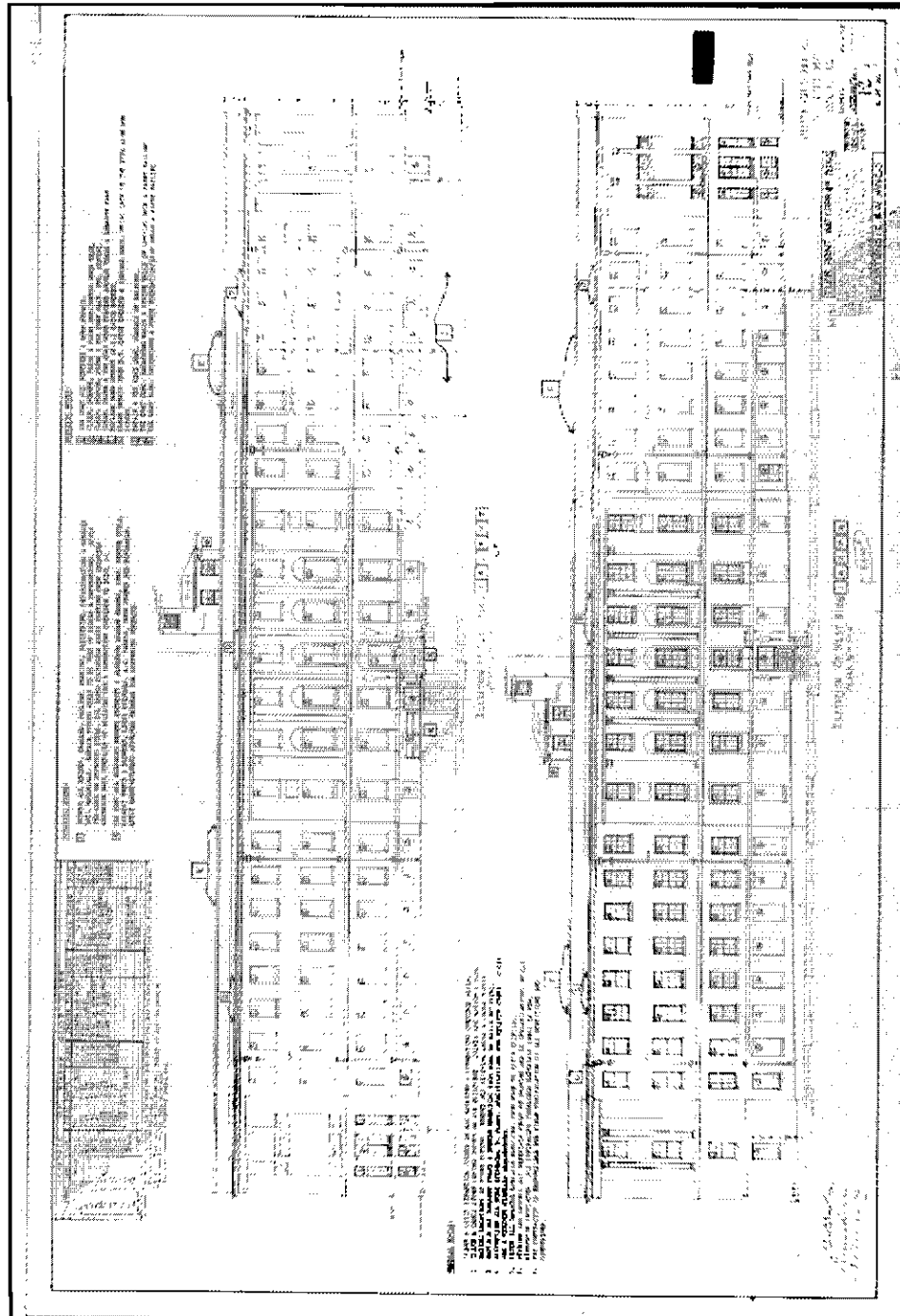


Original floor plan of the third floor of the central portion of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922



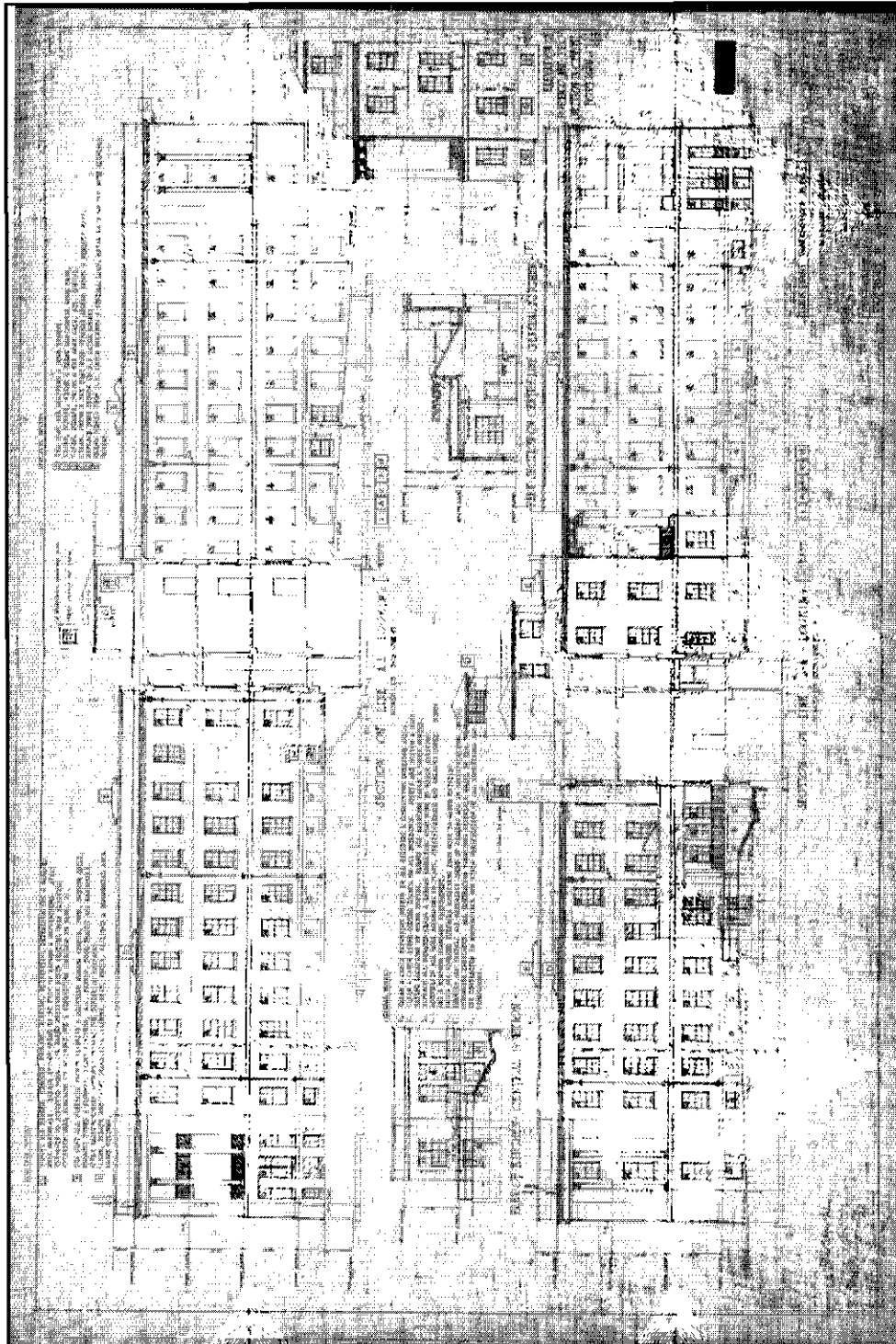
Original floor plan of the third floor of the wings of the  
Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 28)



Original elevations of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922  
(reflecting changes made in the 1980s)

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MAIN HOSPITAL  
HABS No. MO-1943-A  
(Page 29)



Original sections of the Main Hospital (Building 1), 1922